

Important things you need to understand about resettling in the United States

Note: This document was prepared to assist you in adjusting to your new life in the United States. Professional resettlement staff from across the U.S. collaborated to identify key points on issues of primary interest or concern to Iraqi refugees who have already been resettled. These suggestions were then collated by the Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration as a tool to help inform you about the many new experiences you will encounter as you resettle in your new home. Welcome!

Employment

- Your first job in the U.S. will most likely not be in the same profession or field as your job back home, and will most likely be an entry level non-professional job. You may eventually find a job in the same field after you establish a work history in the U.S., gain proficiency in the English language, and obtain any required recertification or training. Until then, your adjustment to a self-sufficient life in the United States will be aided if you are willing to accept entry level work in a field outside of your training or specialty.
- Do not expect to stay home and learn English only while you wait for the perfect job. It is very important that you accept any reasonable job that becomes available to ensure that you can pay your own living expenses and achieve economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible after arrival.

Housing, Clothing, and Furnishings

- The initial assistance you receive for housing, household supplies, and furniture is very basic, and many items such as clothing and furniture may be used, secondhand, or very inexpensive. All items provided will be clean and hygienic.
- Apartments are the most accessible and affordable form of housing for many Americans, and this is what you should expect for your first home in the U.S. Single individuals may be placed with another single person of the same gender to better afford living expenses. If you choose to do so, and respecting any lease agreement you may have signed, you may move after you start working and can afford the housing of your choice.

Health Care

- Public health care coverage is limited; dental or eye care may not be covered. It may take weeks to see a doctor for a routine appointment, although critical health needs will be met in a timely manner. Once you become employed and can purchase private medical insurance, your health care options will greatly increase.
- There is no stigma attached to mental health or psychosocial services in the U.S., and you should take advantage of these services if they are available and you think that they would help you. Your resettlement agency sponsor will assist you in finding appropriate health care services.

Cultural Adjustment

- Your first year in the U.S. will be a period of adjustment. You will be in a new home, living in a new community, adhering to new laws, working in a new job, and making new friends. Your resettlement agency staff will support your efforts to rebuild your life and will do their best to help you become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible.
- The U.S. consists of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the resettlement agencies that help Iraqis are equally diverse. You should expect that your case workers may be of any race or ethnicity.

Reception and Placement (R&P) Benefits and Other Assistance

- The not-for-profit agency that will assist in your resettlement has limited resources to meet your immediate basic needs upon arrival. Early employment and wise budgeting of money are crucial for your early self-sufficiency.
- You do not need to pay anyone - friends, relatives, or an agency - to sponsor you in the U.S.
- The cost of living and availability of public support varies throughout the U.S. The assistance that is provided to you will not be comparable from one place to another. If your friends in one U.S. state tell you they are receiving certain benefits each month, this does not mean that you will receive the same benefits in a different state.
- You will be referred to an employment program and assisted with finding a job no matter where you are resettled.
- There is no preferential treatment for refugees who worked for or were associated with the U.S. Government. Eligibility for refugee benefits and services is not affected by nationality or race.
- The U.S. Government requires the resettlement agencies to provide basic household goods and furnishings. This does NOT include luxury items such as: TVs, radios, telephones, DVD players, computers, vacuums, extra items for guests, bicycles, cars, or air conditioners. These items may be available only if the agency receives them as donations from other sources.